



Saskatchewan
Ministry of
Agriculture

Farm & Food Report

Communications Branch, Walter Scott Building
3085 Albert Street, Regina, Canada, S4S 0B1

Saskatchewan

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Log Number: 07-53-222

Week of December 31, 2007

GRAIN INDUSTRY TAKES CENTRE STAGE AT CROP PRODUCTION WEEK

A mainstay of the Saskatchewan agricultural industry is back. The 2008 edition of Crop Production Week will take place from January 5 to 12 in Saskatoon.

"It's a huge annual event that's been going on for many, many years, and it always attracts a big crowd to the city," said Kevin Hursh, who handles communication activities for the event.

The Western Canadian Crop Production Show, regularly held in conjunction with the week-long event, will also make its return, running from January 7 to 10 at Prairieland Park in Saskatoon. It features the latest in farm technology, services and products.

"The Crop Production Show is a huge tradeshow with everything producers might need for the upcoming growing season," Hursh said. "Crop Production Week itself includes many other meetings involving a long list of grower organizations that specialize in various types of crops."

Among the member organizations that make up Crop Production Week are: the Saskatchewan Pulse Growers, the Saskatchewan Flax Development Commission, the Saskatchewan Seed Growers Association, the Saskatchewan Canola Growers Association, the Saskatchewan Canola Development Commission, the Saskatchewan Winter Cereals Development Commission, the Saskatchewan Oat Development Commission, the Canaryseed Development Commission of Saskatchewan, the Saskatchewan Mustard Development Commission, the Saskatchewan Fruit Growers Association, the Saskatchewan Herb and Spice Association, the Canadian Wheat Board, the Saskatchewan Agricultural Graduates Association, and the College of Agriculture and Bioresources (associate member).

"Each association handles its own event, and there are sponsors who help with the overall co-ordination, advertising and organizing the week's activities," Hursh noted.

The intent of Crop Production Week is to provide a convenient forum for producers from all over the province to come together and receive information about what's going on in their industry. "Sharing the time and resources enables us to put on a terrific event that starts to make a lot of sense for the producers who might be coming in, because a canola grower may also be growing pulses, or may be growing flax, mustard, canaryseed or a whole host of other crops," Hursh said.

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"Making it a week-long event where we try to get everything in one place at one time offers producers a good bang for their buck. It also makes it easier to attract the best speakers, and having the tradeshow going on at the same time is an added bonus."

One of the highlights of this year's program is a panel discussion that will take place on Wednesday night, focusing on grain transportation, its challenges and possible solutions. It is a special session presented by all of the member groups that is expected to draw a large crowd.

While attendance at the individual meetings varies considerably, overall annual numbers for Crop Production Week are usually in the range of 15,000 people. Last year was off somewhat with a huge blizzard that hit Saskatoon mid-week and affected attendance.

While the week's activities are a big attraction for producers, Hursh says they also have considerable appeal for agri-business, government and international visitors. "Industry wants to be there to see what's going on, and also has huge involvement at the tradeshow. Governments want to know what's going on within the organizations, because there is a lot of policy that gets discussed. International visitors are there because they are buying from Canada, and they want to know what the latest varieties are, and who's doing what in the industry," he noted.

"So you end up with quite a mix of people. Certainly producers are the number one audience, but there are lots of others involved."

The website for Crop Production Week, www.cropweek.com, has been revamped this year to be more user-friendly and easier to navigate. It contains information on all of the week's activities, including agendas and registration details for the individual organization meetings, and direct links to some of their websites. It also enables users to access material on the Western Canadian Crop Production Show.

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BEEF AND FORAGE WORKSHOPS HELP WITH DECISION-MAKING

Two seminars coming up in mid-January will be of interest to forage and beef producers faced with challenging decisions in the ever-volatile livestock industry.

The workshop "Grain or Grass? Decision-Making Tools" will take place January 14 in Weyburn, while the 2008 Beef and Forage Seminar, entitled "Planning Today to Succeed Tomorrow," will be held January 15 in Yorkton.

While there is some distinction between the two sessions, their agendas feature a number of overlapping discussion topics and speakers. According to Livestock Development Specialist Naomi Paley with the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture, there are good reasons for the similarities.

"The livestock industry across western Canada is facing some fairly consistent issues. The soaring Canadian dollar and dramatic increases in the price of feed and other grains have created some challenges that are common to all beef producers," Paley said.

"In fact, the past year has been quite a rollercoaster ride for the agriculture industry in general, and nowhere is that more evident than in the cattle sector."

The seminars are being co-hosted by the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture, the Saskatchewan Forage Council, Ducks Unlimited Canada, and the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority.

According to Paley, the organizers have put together wide-ranging workshops that will provide a lot of helpful information for livestock and forage producers.

"We realize that most beef and grass producers are in it for the long haul, and in many cases, would like to see it that way for the next generation, as well," she said. "So the focus of these meetings is exactly that."

The presentations will feature a combination of both technical experts and actual producers sharing their knowledge and experience in various areas.

"We're going to be highlighting some of the tools that producers have available to help them make informed marketing and production decisions," Paley noted. "And we'll be talking about ways for

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producers to 'think outside the box' when it comes to grass, cattle and business, to help them ride out the ups and downs of the industry."

In addition, the sessions will provide some insight into where markets are going and how to navigate them for the long-term. The Yorkton workshop will also feature a discussion offering tips and examples for successful farm transfers from one generation to the next, while the Weyburn meeting will look at the economics between grain and grass production. A panel discussion will round out the agendas of both seminars.

Producers interested in attending either session are asked to pre-register by January 11 by calling the Saskatchewan Forage Council at (306) 966-2148. Registration costs are \$20 per person, which includes lunch.

For more information on the workshops, producers can contact the Saskatchewan Forage Council or phone Paley directly at (306) 786-1686.

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OPTIMISM IN CANOLA COUNTRY SETS STAGE FOR CONFERENCE

The solid growth and development being experienced by the canola sector should make for a lot of optimism when producers and other industry stakeholders meet for "Canola Days" on January 9 and 10 at the Saskatoon Inn.

The two-day seminar is being held in conjunction with Crop Production Week, taking place January 5 to 12 in Saskatoon.

Canola Days are jointly presented by the Saskatchewan Canola Growers Association (SCGA) and the Saskatchewan Canola Development Commission (SCDC).

The SCGA is a membership-based, non-profit organization that dates back to 1969. It seeks to provide a strong and effective voice to growers in dealings with government and industry, and helps to provide producers with the latest agronomic and marketing information on canola and its products.

The SCDC was established in 1991 with a mandate to enhance Saskatchewan canola growers' competitiveness and profitability through a producer-led and producer-controlled fund to support research, market development and extension activities.

David Altrogge, a Communications Officer with the SCDC, says the two groups are teaming up to present producers with a good cross-section of issues from both the production side and the policy side of the canola sector.

"Canola is becoming such a valuable crop in western Canada, even challenging wheat for dominance in terms of seeded acreage," Altrogge noted. "It's turning into a very important commodity that people are interested in, and they generally come out in good numbers to hear more about the crop and the industry."

Altrogge pointed to recent announcements surrounding canola crushing plants and biodiesel production in Saskatchewan as a sign of the industrial, economic development, and value-added opportunities the crop holds. "Research is turning up more uses and more benefits for canola all the time," he stated. "I think its future is absolutely onward and upward, and Saskatchewan stands to be one of the main beneficiaries."

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The first day of the Canola Days seminar will focus more on the actual production of the crop itself. It will feature discussion on topics such as stand establishment, storage and disease control, as well as growing, harvesting and management practices for maximizing the crop.

The second day will be more geared towards the higher-level industry view and the policy side of the canola sector. It will include presentations on plans for expanding canola demand and production, a canola risk management project, the outlook for commodity markets, and biotechnology in agriculture.

The SCDC and SCGA annual general meetings will also be part of the program.

Altrogge believes one of the most interesting features on the agenda will be a presentation from Steve Langford, the Chief Purchasing Officer with Prizm Group and United Purchasing Group of Canada, who will talk about the recent decision of KFC restaurants in Canada to switch from using hydrogenated shortening to high-stability canola oil for cooking their chicken.

"We're seeing a growing interest among fast food franchises to make this kind of switch," Altrogge said. "It's the type of development that could potentially be huge for the canola industry, and particularly for growers."

Estimated attendance for Canola Days is expected to be around 350 people, according to Altrogge. In addition to producers, he anticipates good representation from the research community, which is very active in the sector.

As a result of the refundable check-off on Saskatchewan-produced canola, Altrogge says the SCDC has a budget of about \$2.5 million this year. "What happens with that money? A lot of it goes towards research projects at the University of Saskatchewan and elsewhere to continue developing the industry," he noted.

More information on the Canola Days seminar can be found online at the website for Crop Production Week 2008. Visit www.cropweek.com and click on the "Canola" link.

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RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT KEY TO GROWING CANARYSEED MARKET

A seminar hosted by the Canaryseed Development Commission of Saskatchewan (CDCS) will inform growers about the progress being made towards generating new uses and new markets for the crop.

The session will take place on January 9 in Saskatoon as one of the events being held in conjunction with Crop Production Week 2008.

The CDCS was established in March 2006, and administers the revenue generated through a check-off collected on the sale of Saskatchewan-produced canaryseed.

"Its mission is to co-ordinate research and market use expansion for the advancement of the canaryseed industry and the benefit of growers and stakeholders," said Ray McVicar, a Manager in Production Technology with the Saskatchewan Ministry of Agriculture.

Although the commission is fairly new to the scene, McVicar says it has a very significant mandate. Among its most important initiatives is developing potential new uses for canaryseed.

"Saskatchewan is the largest producer and exporter of canaryseed in the world," he stated. "But the demand for the crop is fairly stable. It's really only used for one market at present, and that's bird seed for wild and caged birds."

As a result, the commodity price tends to rise when Saskatchewan producers grow less canaryseed, and decreases when they produce greater quantities of the crop.

"There's not much benefit to growing more canaryseed if we're simply competing with ourselves for the same pie," McVicar noted. "So the main goal of the commission is to develop new markets for the crop, in part by developing new uses."

Another goal of the CDCS is to fund research into improving the crop and developing new varieties that will better lend themselves to new uses. "The only plant-breeding institution for canaryseed that I know of is at the University of Saskatchewan," said McVicar. "Although it's a small program at present, it's important that it be nurtured to continue doing the kind of work that can really advance the canaryseed industry."

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A third goal of the CDCS is to represent canaryseed growers on various issues, and to communicate with them on the new research being done and the results being found. In that respect, the meeting at Crop Production Week is a good opportunity.

"The agenda will feature an update on the research projects underway with canaryseed, including some plant breeding studies and agronomy research," said McVicar. "There will be two speakers on potential new uses and commodity markets being explored, as well as presentations on what the current markets look like – pricing, supply, exports and so forth."

The annual general meetings of the CDCS will also be held at the seminar, informing producers what the commission has been up to and how it has been spending growers' check-off dollars.

McVicar says he expects the seminar to attract not only producers, but also representatives from marketing and trading companies, as well as exporters and researchers.

More information on the CDCS seminar can be found online at the website for Crop Production Week 2008. Visit www.cropweek.com and click on the "Canaryseed" link.

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SEMINARS LOOK AT ECONOMICS AND OPPORTUNITY IN CATTLE INDUSTRY

Livestock producers looking to spend a few hours away from the farm have an opportunity to hear from some interesting and innovative speakers at a pair of workshops around the corner.

The "Winter Feeding, Ranch Economics and Future Opportunities in the Livestock Industry" seminars will take place in Hafford on January 8 and Kenaston on January 9.

Duane Hill, a Conservation Program Specialist with Ducks Unlimited Canada, says the sessions will provide producers with a dose of motivation, as well as some good, practical information that can help them in their operations.

"The overall purpose is to give people that shot in the arm. The livestock industry is facing some challenges right now, while the grain sector looks pretty good by comparison to those looking over the fence," Hill said.

"We wanted to bring in some people who are fairly successful on the grass side of it, and let them tell their stories and what they're doing that is helping their operations to excel."

Hill says the program is producer-based, focusing on the personal and practical side of the livestock industry with speakers who are "earning their living as producers and living it every day." They are Dr. Christoph Weder, Bruce Chern and Steve Kenyon.

Weder and his wife Erika own and operate SpiritView Ranch in the Peace River region of Alberta. They are the proud recipients of the 2006 National Young Farmers of the Year and the 2006 Outstanding Young Farmers of Alberta awards.

Chern and his wife Patti have a 3,500-acre ranch near Stockholm, where they run a 500-head cow-calf operation. They also help manage a custom grazing operation where they plan to graze up to 10,000 yearlings.

Kenyon and his wife Stacey own and operate Greener Pastures Grazing Ltd. They custom graze 500 cow-calf pairs and rent most of their land. Steve has gone from being a full-time truck driver in the oil field to being able to stay at home with his family, starting from scratch and building an impressive livestock-based business venture.

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According to Hill, the workshop agenda will feature discussion on the topic of winter feeding of cattle. It will likewise include a session on ranch economics, and the business aspects of generating revenue and controlling costs. Presenters will also talk about opportunities that exist in the livestock sector, and approaches to better marketing. As well, since many cattle operations are run as a family business, there will be some attention paid to managing the "human side" of the industry and making decisions as a family unit.

Hill says the workshops will offer a lot of interaction for those who attend. "While we've lined up some very exciting guest speakers, it's not going to be the type of seminar where you just sit there and listen for the day. We're going to have break-out groups, we're going to have different themes for discussion, people are going to be asked to work together to look at different questions, and it's going to be based on what the speakers are talking about," he noted.

"The one thing we are really trying to do is engage the people who come out and join us."

The cost to attend the "Winter Feeding, Ranch Economics and Future Opportunities in the Livestock Industry" workshop is \$5 per person, which includes a hot lunch. For more information or to register for either session, contact Ducks Unlimited Canada at (306) 665-7356. Those pre-registering for Hafford by January 3 and Kenaston by January 4 will have their names entered to win a \$500 door prize.

"We are really looking forward to it," Hill said. "We've got some terrific speakers coming in, and it's not going to be your regular 'sit, look and listen' type of program."

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